

REMARKS

The enclosed is responsive to the Examiner's Office Action mailed on June 5 2009. At the time the Examiner mailed the Office Action, claims 1-31 were pending. By way of the present response applicants have: 1) amended claims 1, 4-8, 10, 12, 14-16, 20, 22, 24-26, 29, and 30; and 2) added no claims; and 3) canceled claims 3, 13, and 23. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully requested.

Drawing Objections

The Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a) and requested that the drawings show the diffuser layer and photoresistor as recited in claims 17 and 27. Applicants have enclosed a replacement sheet including new Figure 16 to illustrate the diffuser layer and photoresistor as requested. Figure 16 is supported by the specification as originally filed - e.g., at least in paragraphs [0062] and [0070]. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, applicants submit that the objection to the drawings has been overcome.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

Claim 25 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as lacking of antecedent basis for "wherein the curved surface is a cylindrical surface." Applicants have amended claim 25 to depend from claim 24 to provide proper antecedent basis. Accordingly, applicants submit that the rejection of claim 25 has been overcome.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2, 4-12, 14-16, 20-21, and 28-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S Patent No. 5,693,962 by Shi et al, (hereinafter “Shi”).

Shi describes an organic light emitting diode array. Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Shi fails to disclose “a plurality of conductive elements in contact with the dielectric elements, arranged so as to apply a voltage across each of the plurality of electroluminescent elements ***in a direction substantially parallel to the surface of the transparent substrate.***” (Claim 1) (emphasis added). In contrast to claim 1, Shi describes that a voltage applied by an electronic driver is perpendicular to the substrate. As shown in Figure 5 of Shi, and described in columns 4 and 5, electroluminescent elements (202, 203, 204) are sandwiched between an anode (101) and cathodes (106, 108, 110). The anode and cathode are situated perpendicular to the electroluminescent elements. A voltage applied across the electroluminescent elements, therefore, must be perpendicular to the substrate 100, rather than parallel to the substrate as recited in claim 1.

Furthermore, applying a voltage across each of the plurality of electroluminescent elements in a direction substantially parallel to the surface of the transparent substrate, as presently claimed, allows the light-emitting panel to omit an expensive transparent conductive layer. In contrast, Shi describes electroluminescent elements that are located on top of “light transmissive, conductive strips 101” (i.e., the anode). (Shi, col. 3, lines 45-46).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 1 has been overcome.

Given that claims 2, 4-12, 14-16, and 20-21 are dependent upon claim 1, and include additional features, applicants submit that the rejection of claims 2, 4-12, 14-16, and 20-21 has been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Furthermore, the Examiner's rejection of claims 6, 7, 16, and 20 alleges that claim features recited in each merely state an intended use rather than patentable subject matter. Applicants respectfully disagree. Nevertheless, in the interest of furthering prosecution, applicants have amended claims 6, 7, 16, and 20 to clarify that subject matter is not an intended use, but rather a specifically described structure. Additionally, claims 6, 7, 16, and 20 are structurally different than Shi for the reasons set forth in the discussion of claim 1 above.

Regarding claim 28, applicants respectfully submit that Shi fails to disclose depositing a conductive element on the top of each dielectric element. In contrast, Shi describes depositing conductive layers (106, 108, 110) on top of electroluminescent elements (202, 203, 204) rather than on top of the dielectric elements (103). (Shi, Figs. 2-5, col. 5, lines 13-34).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 28 has been overcome.

Regarding claim 29, similar to claim 1 above, Shi fails to disclose

A method of emitting light from a light-emitting panel, wherein the panel includes a transparent substrate, a plurality of electroluminescent elements on the surface of the transparent substrate, a plurality of dielectric elements located between the electroluminescent elements, and a plurality of conductive elements in contact with the dielectric elements, arranged so as to apply a voltage across each of the plurality of electroluminescent elements ***in a direction substantially parallel to the surface of the transparent substrate***, the method comprising:

supplying an alternating voltage to alternate conductive elements so that each of the electroluminescent elements is provided with an alternating voltage across it and emits light.

(Claim 29) (emphasis added).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 29 has been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Regarding claim 30, similar to claim 1 above, Shi fails to disclose

A method of emitting light from a light-emitting panel, wherein the panel includes a transparent substrate, a plurality of electroluminescent elements on the surface of the transparent substrate, a plurality of dielectric elements located between the electroluminescent elements, and a plurality of conductive elements in contact with the dielectric elements, arranged so as to apply a voltage across each of the plurality of electroluminescent elements ***in a direction substantially parallel to the surface of the transparent substrate***, the method comprising:
supplying an alternating voltage to adjacent pairs of the conductive elements so as to activate a first set of alternate electroluminescent elements to emit light.

(Claim 30) (emphasis added).

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 30 has been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Given that claim 31 is dependent upon claim 30, and includes additional features, applicants submit that the rejection of claim 31 had been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 17-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shi in view of U.S. Patent No. 2005/0231085 by Song et al (hereinafter, “Song”).

Applicants respectfully submit that Song is not prior art to the present application. The present application claims priority Great Britain Patent Application No. 0308161.9, which was filed April 9, 2003. The priority date of the present application is therefore prior to Song.

Given that claims 17-19 are dependent upon claim 1, and include additional features, and given that Song is not prior art, applicants submit that the rejection of claims 17-19 has been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Claims 24 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shi in view of U.S. Patent No. 2005/0110388 by Takeuchi et al (hereinafter, “Takeuchi”).

Applicants respectfully submit that Takeuchi is not prior art to the present application. The present application claims priority Great Britain Patent Application No. 0308161.9, which was filed April 9, 2003. The priority date of the present application is therefore prior to Takeuchi.

Given that claims 24 and 25 are dependent upon claim 1, and include additional features, and given that Takeuchi is not prior art, applicants submit that the rejection of claims 24 and 25 has been overcome for at least the reasons set forth above.

Claim 26 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,422,714 by Hubbell et al (hereinafter, "Hubbell").

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Shi and Hubbell fails to disclose

A sign panel, comprising:
a light-emitting panel including
a transparent substrate,
a plurality of electroluminescent elements on
the surface of the transparent substrate,
a plurality of dielectric elements located
between the electroluminescent elements, and
a plurality of conductive elements in contact
with the dielectric elements, arranged so as to
apply a voltage across each of the plurality of
electroluminescent elements ***in a direction
substantially parallel to the surface of the
transparent substrate***; and
a transparent, retroreflective layer arranged on the
opposite side of the transparent substrate to the
electroluminescent elements.

(Claim 26)(emphasis added).

As argued above, Shi fails to disclose the above-emphasized feature. Applicants respectfully submit that Hubbell is focused on an illuminated traffic sign and its power source, but Hubbell fails to remedy the shortcomings of Shi.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 26 has been overcome.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 22 and 27 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants reserve the right to rewrite claims 22 and 27 in independent form at a later date.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that in view of the amendments and arguments set forth herein, the applicable objections and rejections have been overcome.

Applicants reserve all rights under the doctrine of equivalents.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.136(a)(3), applicants hereby request and authorize the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to (1) treat any concurrent or future reply that requires a petition for extension of time as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time and (2) charge all required fees, including extension of time fees and fees under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 and 1.17, to Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

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